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ABSTRACT

Procedures for five English-as-a-Second-Language dictation exercises designed to enhance students' ability to self-correct are described, and suggested texts are presented. The self-correcting dictations allow students to practice their listening, gain instant feedback, and have practical information in hard form quickly. They also reduce the teacher's correction load. The dictation ideas include: a dictation read four times, with written assistance given on the first reading; a slotted or cloze dictation; peer dictation; an exercise having a small group of students reconstruct a brief passage read twice; and student construction of a dictation for others. Notes from an article on procedures for dicto-comps are also reproduced. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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Self-Correcting Dictations

A poster session
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Self-correcting dictations allow students to:

1. **practice their listening.**
2. **gain instant feedback.**
3. **have practical information in hard form quickly.**

Teachers don't have dictations to correct.

A good source of dictation ideas is the Cambridge University Press book by Paul Davis and Mario Rinvolucri, Dictations: New Methods, New Possibilities

A 4-times dictation – ***It is read 4 times.***

1. ***After getting paper and pencil ready for the dictation, ask the students to sit quietly and listen to the first reading.***
2. ***During this reading, pause at the end of each sentence to give students the opportunity to say the sounds for which they cannot visualize words. As they say these sounds, write the corresponding words on the board.***
3. ***Read the dictation as the students write. Pause at the end of sentences.***
4. ***Read the dictation again so that students can check their work.***
5. ***Hand them a copy of the dictation to check their work. If you wanted to "test" them on this, why not let them study this copy for a graded dictation on the same material the next day?***

--Idea from James Weaver

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Judith Coppock Gex

A slotted dictation

Before giving students the dictation sheets, ask them to get out a sheet of paper to cover up all the information on the form except for
1.____ ___IRT #7____ __ _____ _____.

Make sure everyone has the paper covered correctly before beginning.
Read it while they write. Then have them pull down the cover sheet and check their answers. Try to fit a sentence on a line so you can read the sentence as a native speaker would.

This is a good way to give students directions that you want them to understand and have in writing so they can check back on it. I give subway directions for trips, information about getting cheap theater tickets, a library card or shopping of the Lower East Side in this format. Some teachers use this format to give a few grammar rules before the students practice them.

1.____ ___IRT #7____ __ _____ _____.
1.Take the train to Grand Central.

After writing down what the teacher or another student says, the student uncovers the answer and checks his work.

--idea from Mary Hines

Peer Dictations

During a dictation like this, everyone in the room has the opportunity to read, write, speak and listen.

Pair your students. Have them decide which partner will be the first to read and which will be the first to write.

Hand the first partner these directions and the first group of sentences.

1. **Read these sentences to yourself before reading them aloud to your partner.**
2. ***Read them aloud.***
3. ***Your partner should write down what you read.***
4. ***Let your partner use this paper to check his/her work.***
5. ***Ask for more sentences.***

1. **Wait in the line at Castle Clinton to buy tickets for the statue ferry.**
2. **Take something with you to read while you wait.**

--idea from James Weaver

Dicto-Comp

1. Put students in groups of three. Ask them to get out pencil and paper and put them down and listen.
2. Read the poem or paragraph once at regular speed and intonation.
3. Have students write down what they can catch when you read it the second time. Don't repeat anything. Just keep going.
4. Then the three students compare what they caught and try to reconstruct the passage.
5. After a little while, put three lists with numbered lines on the wall in different parts of the room. Each student can go to one list. That means that every group of three students should have one student per list. The three lists are "verbs" – "nouns and pronouns" – "all the other words." After the students have checked the lists, they get back together and finish reconstructing the passage. There is a lot of language practice going on as the students succeed at this task.

Suggestion: ***If you are doing this with a large group of students, make two copies of each list so there is not too much of a crowd in any one location.***

I've used this technique in schools where there aren't enough books to teach the introductory paragraph to a lesson before the students share books to see it. It's fun to open a book and realize you know what you are looking at.

Here are examples of poems I might use for a dicto-comp. The article appeared in Hands-On English, ____1998.

by Sara Teasdale
Life has loveliness to sell
All beautiful and splendid
things
Blue waves whitened on a cliff
Climbing fire that sways and
sings
And children's faces looking up
Holding wonder like a cup
Life has loveliness to sell
Music like a curve of gold
Scent of pine trees in the rain
Eyes that love you, arms that
hold
And for your spirit's still
delight
Holy thoughts that star the
night
Spend all you have for
loveliness
Buy it and never count the cost
For one white singing hour of
peace
Count many a year of strife well
lost
And for a breath of ecstasy
Give all you have been or could
be.

All the other words

1. to
2. All beautiful and splendid
3. Blue on a
4. Climbing that and
5. And children's
6. like a
to
8. like a of
9. of pine in the
10. that that
11. And for your spirit's still
12. Holy that the
13. all for
14. and never the
15. For one white singing of
16. many a of well lost
17. And for a of
18. all or .

VERBS

1. has sell
2.
3.

whitened

4. sways sings
5. looking up
6. Holding
7. has

sell

8.
9.
10. love

hold

11.
12. star
13. Spend have
14. Buy count
15.
16. Count
17.
18. Give have been could be

Nouns and pronouns

1. Life loveliness
2. things
3. waves cliff
4. fire
5. faces
6. wonder cup

7. Life loveliness
8. Music curve gold
9. Scent trees rain
10. Eyes you arms
11. delight
12. thoughts night
13. you loveliness
14. it cost
15. hour peace
16. year strife
17. breath ecstasy
18. you .

We join spokes together in a wheel

By Lao Tzu ca 604-531 B.C.E.

1. We join spokes together in a wheel,
2. But it is the center hole that makes the wagon move.
3. We shape clay into a pot,
4. But it's the emptiness inside that holds whatever we want.
5. We hammer wood for a house,
6. But it's the inner space that makes it livable.
7. We work with being,
8. But non-being is what we use.

Nouns and pronouns

1. We spokes wheel,
2. it hole wagon .
3. We clay pot,
4. it emptiness we .
5. We wood house,
6. it space it .
7. We being,
8. non-being we .

All the other words

1. together in a ,
2. But the center that the .
3. into a ,
4. But the inside that whatever .
5. for a ,
6. But the inner that livable.
7. with ,
8. But what .

Verbs

1. join ,
2. is makes move.
3. shape ,
4. 's holds
want.
5. hammer ,
6. 's makes .
7. work ,
8. is use.

A "Silent Way" Dictation

Put some words on the board like this. Have a student point out a sentence or a question for others to say and write down.

When		**come**	**will**	**,**
when	**go**		**home**	**.**
she	**eat**		**out**	**?**
you	**walk**	**fries**		
I	**work**			
What		**-s**		
what		***-ed***		

Tools & techniques:
Dicto-comps—for listening, speaking & grammar

Mario Rinvolucri describes one way to work with this technique in his book *Grammar Games*, and also in *Dictations: New Methods, New Possibilities* (which he wrote with Paul Davis). I've added a few adaptations of my own to his basic idea.

Students enjoy doing a dicto-comp, and it helps them remember the lesson. While I have done many dicto-comp lessons with poems, I have also done them with paragraphs telling a short story from a traditional West African textbook before allowing the students to open the book and check their work. Students are delightfully surprised that they know the lesson already by practicing it while completing the dicto-comp.

Here's how to do it:

1. Ask the students to get a piece of paper and a pencil ready to work. Tell them to put these down on the desk, fold their hands and just listen.

2. Read the dicto-comp passage once at a normal speed while they listen.

3. Read the dicto-comp passage again at a normal speed while they write. Do not repeat anything.

4. Ask them to get into groups of three and compare what they caught of your dictation.

5. When they are finished reconstructing what they can, tell them to send one member of their group to each of the three lists you have taped on the wall at different parts of the room. The lists have numbered lines. One list includes all the nouns and pronouns. A second list includes all the verbs. The third list gives all the other words.

6. When the three members regroup after seeing the lists, they should be able to completely reconstruct the passage.

I've used this technique in both big and small classes. When I used it in a class of about 120 students in West Africa, I made two copies in big letters on newsprint of each of the three lists so that the number of students around each list was not unnecessarily unwieldy.

Try some poems

Dicto-comps are a great way to introduce poetry. Two poems I have used with my students include "Life has loveliness to sell" by Sara Teasdale, and "The Moon's the North Wind's Cooky" by Vachel Lindsay.

You can find lots of poetry on the Internet. One source for modern poetry that would be of interest to advanced students is The Internet Poetry Archive at the University of North Carolina:

http://sunsite.unc.edu/dykki/poetry

One ESL teacher's site that has lots of poetry ideas is Leslie Opp-Beckman's PIZAZZ, http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~leslieob/pizzaz.html

Why it works

The students reconstruct a text as if it were a puzzle, using clues from several sources. Once the task is finished, they will know the text well.

Unlike a dictation, which works best when students are already familiar with the text, a dicto-comp can be used to introduce new material.

*—by **Judy Gex**, ESL instructor at LaGuardia Community College, New York, NY.*